

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 089270

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

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FISHERIES ATTACHE

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SENV, MX

SUBJECT: INFORMAL BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING SEA
TURTLES OF MUTUAL INTEREST

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. PHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES OFFICIAL, LIC. ARTURO DIAZ-ROJO,
AND PRUDENCE FOX OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, HAS
RESULTED IN AGREEMENT THAT BILATERAL DISCUSSION ON SEA
TURTLES SHOULD BE HELD AT SAME TIME AS FORTHCOMING MARINE
MAMMAL NEGOTIATIONS IN MEXICO CITY MAY 2-4. REQUEST
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PAGE 02 STATE 089270

EMBASSY CONFIRM THIS AGREEMENT AND PROPOSE THAT SEA TURTLE
MEETING TAKE PLACE AT END (EVENING, IF NECESSARY) OF FIRST
DAY'S SESSION ON MAY 2, ALLOWING ADDITIONAL TIME SUBSEQUENT-
LY AS NEEDED. SUGGEST THAT DISCUSSIONS FOCUS ON
ITEMS IN PARAGRAPH 8 BELOW. UNDERSTAND THAT MEXICAN AU-
THORITIES ORGANIZING FIELD TRIP TO SEE SEA TURTLES. WOULD
APPRECIATE DETAILS.

2. DURING DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON WITH THE GOM IN MARCH 1977 ON A VARIETY OF FISHERIES MATTERS, THE SUBJECT OF SEA TURTLES WAS RAISED BY THE MEXICANS. THE GOM DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES OFFICIALS EXPLAINED IN DETAIL THE CONSERVATION PROGRAM FOR PACIFIC (OLIVE) RIDLEY AND GREEN SEA TURTLES ON THEIR WEST COAST.

3. IMPACT OF THE NEW LISTING OF THESE TWO SPECIES ON APPENDIX I OF THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES) ON MEXICAN EXPORTS TO THE U.S. WAS POINTED OUT AT THE MARCH 1977 MEETING. USG OFFICIALS INDICATED THAT REGULATIONS IMPLEMENTING U.S. OBLIGATIONS UNDER CITES WOULD ENTER INTO EFFECT IN MAY 1977. AS OF MAY 1977, IT WOULD NO LONGER BE POSSIBLE FOR MEXICAN EXPORTERS OF PRODUCTS FROM PACIFIC RIDLEY AND GREEN SEA TURTLES TO EXPORT THESE PRODUCTS TO THE UNITED STATES, BECAUSE THEIR LISTING ON APPENDIX I BECAME EFFECTIVE IN FEBRUARY 1977.

4. LATER IN 1977, THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR MADE AN INTERIM EXCEPTION WITH RESPECT TO THESE MEXICAN EXPORTERS. THEY STATED THAT A CERTIFICATION FROM GOM OFFICIALS TO PROVIDE PROOF THAT THE SEA TURTLES PRODUCTS BEING EXPORTED WERE FROM TURTLES TAKEN BEFORE FEBRUARY 1977 (I.E., PRIOR TO THEIR BEING LISTED ON APPENDIX I) WOULD PERMIT USG LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 STATE 089270

OFFICIALS TO ALLOW ENTRY OF THESE PRODUCTS.

5. USG IS NOW CONSIDERING FURTHER ACTION, WHICH WOULD AFFECT MEXICAN EXPORTS TO THE U.S. USG IS CONSIDERING ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS IN CONJUNCTION WITH LISTING THE PACIFIC RIDLEY AND GREEN SEA TURTLES IN THE U.S. THREATENED SPECIES LIST UNDER THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT OF 1973. THE INTERIM EXCEPTION (PARA 4, ABOVE) IS ALSO UNDER REVIEW. EITHER OF THESE ACTIONS WOULD OR COULD RESULT IN AN END OF THE POSSIBILITY OF MEXICAN IMPORTS OF SEA TURTLE PRODUCTS. MORE THAN A YEAR HAS NOW ELAPSED SINCE SEA TURTLES BECAME APPENDIX I SPECIES ON FEBRUARY 1977. USG HAS OBLIGATION UNDER CITES TO ALLOW NO IMPORTS FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES EXCEPT FROM CAPTIVE BRED ANIMALS, OR ANIMALS ACQUIRED PRIOR TO THE CONVENTION COMING INTO FORCE (I.E., JULY 1, 1975).

6. SPECIAL WORKING SESSION OF CITES IN OCTOBER 1977 DECIDED THAT ALL SPECIES LISTED ON APPENDICES I AND II SHOULD BE REVIEWED BY THE COUNTRIES WHERE THEY ARE FOUND. ON THE BASIS OF THESE REVIEWS, PROPOSALS COULD BE MADE FOR CHANGES IN THE APPENDIX ON WHICH A SPECIES IS LISTED. GOM

SENT OBSERVER TO OCTOBER MEETING AND INDICATED THAT GOM HAS AN INTEREST IN CHANGING THE LISTING OF PACIFIC RIDLEY AND GREEN SEA TURTLES OFF WEST COAST OF MEXICO.

7. GOM HAS INDICATED INTEREST IN WORKING WITH USG ON SEA TURTLE SITUATION IN GENERAL. USG STRONGLY FAVORS EXPLORING COOPERATION IN SUCH MATTERS AS A JOINT REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF THE TWO SPECIES OF SEA TURTLES IN QUESTION IN PREPARATION FOR MARCH 1979 COSTA RICA CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO CITIES.

8. USG WOULD BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS FOLLOWING TOPICS AT MEETING MAY 2:
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PAGE 04 STATE 089270

A. SCIENTIFIC ASSESSMENTS BY A JOINT MEETING OF U.S. AND MEXICAN SEA TURTLE SCIENTISTS TO PREPARE OR DISCUSS STATUS OF STOCKS OF SEA TURTLES OF MUTUAL INTEREST.

B. USG REGULATIONS (PROPOSED) PLUS POSSIBLE CHANGE IN U.S. INTERIM POLICY ON IMPORT OF SEA TURTLE PRODUCTS, AS THESE RELATE TO MEXICO.

C. IMPORT OF TURTLE PRODUCTS AT PRESENT -- U.S. PROCEDURES AND PROBLEMS UNDER CITES AND U.S. ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT OF 1973. EMBASSY REQUESTED TO INDICATE USG ALSO WILLING TO DISCUSS POSSIBILITIES FOR EXPANDED U.S./MEXICAN - JOINT RESEARCH ON SPECIES OTHER THAN ATLANTIC RIDLEY WHERE JOINT RESEARCH IS ALREADY UNDERWAY. END UNCLASSIFIED.

9. BEGIN LOU. FYI: OFFICIALS IN DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR ARE QUITE CONCERNED AT INDICATIONS THAT QUANTITY OF SEA TURTLE PRODUCTS EXPECTED TO BE SHIPPED IN NEAR FUTURE IS NOT ALL FROM TURTLES TAKEN PRIOR TO FEBRUARY 1977. CERTIFICATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO WOULD, ACCORDING TO THESE INDICATIONS, BE INACCURATE IF IT CERTIFIES THAT ALL THE SKINS AND MEAT ARE FROM SEA TURTLES TAKEN BEFORE FEBRUARY 1977. INTERIOR OFFICIALS HAVE NOT DECIDED ON APPROPRIATE COURSE OF ACTION. END FYI. VANCE

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